

Community Archives Initiative
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Margarita Munoz · Oral History Transcript · Fall 2026

Speaker 1 00:00

All right. This is an oral history interview being conducted by Drew Herring and Brooke Hindley. We are interviewing. Did you say your name?

Speaker 2 00:10

Margarita Muñoz.

Speaker 1 00:11

Awesome. On september 14, 2026. Okay, let's begin. So, what is your full name?

Speaker 2 00:22

Oh, interesting. Okay, full name Margarita Muñoz. My originally full name Salgado. So I have two last names, you know, from back in Mexico, but here in this case it was Margarita Muñoz. So that would be my truly.

Speaker 1 00:44

Awesome, and do I have permission to record this interview? You

Speaker 2 00:48

do have permission.

Speaker 1 00:50

Perfect, and do I have permission to take photos or scan the primary source artifact that you brought?

Speaker 2 00:56

That should be fine.

Speaker 1 00:58

Perfect. Okay, so here's our first kind of big question is just who are you and what do you do?

Speaker 2 01:04

Okay, I guess who I am, you know, many. I guess I can say I'm a mother of two. One is 19, one is 24. Those are my two children. Graduated from college. The other one in

working, and the other one is a junior in college. My husband, and I guess in terms of I have family in the states, North Georgia in Gainesville, and in terms of my education, I have different. I guess my background it's a little bit here and there. I one side is in education, and the other side is in the arts, in particularly in theater acting.

Speaker 1 02:09

That's interesting. So

Speaker 2 02:10

combine that kind of background for the things that I do for the person who I am. So when you ask me, who are you? I guess I'm that person, that combination, that shared my education in different ways and my heritage.

Speaker 1 02:29

I love that. So, could you tell us a little about what you do now in your particular role or job? Yes.

Speaker 2 02:35

Yes. Well, as I said, I work for the Georgia Department of Education, and I'm a senior program manager. It's for the Tatar 1C education of migratory children, which is a program that exists not only in Georgia but across the nation. It dates back to the 60s, and it's a federal program, and work for that.

Speaker 1 03:02

Awesome. So, when and where were you born at?

Speaker 2 03:08

I was born in Mexico, Guerrero State, rural Mexico. More particularly, the name of the the town is Silos England.

Speaker 1 03:21

Okay,

Speaker 2 03:21

it's kind of hard to spell. Those names are hard to spell. But Silo Cinta Guerrero. I guess I had migrated in my life several times. From there, I went to another city where I grew up. Truly, so I felt like you know, if you ask me what is your hometown, it will be Iguala Guerrero.

Speaker 3 03:42

Okay,

Speaker 2 03:43

my heart is there. Yes, my memories, meaningful memories, I guess, different ways. So that would be my hometown. But then I went to Mexico City and I lived there a

significant number of years as well. From there, I came to the states. What was the other question?

Speaker 1 04:01

Just when were you born?

Speaker 2 04:03

Oh, okay. Well, 1970, April 13¹⁹, 70.

Speaker 1 04:08

Awesome. Yeah. Yeah. I love it. So you kind of already said this, but where did you really grow up?

Speaker 2 04:16

Grew up in Mexico. Okay. I mean, I'm continue growing. Yeah, absolutely. You know. every stops for me, but yes, I grew up in Mexico and the south of Mexico, so my heritage is heavily embedded with the culture of South Mexico and Mexico City as well.

Speaker 1 04:37

Yeah.

Speaker 2 04:37

So I would say every place where I was at in Mexico, it was very meaningful to me.

Speaker 1 04:45

That's awesome. Sounds to me like you've kind of moved from some urban to rural places, and

Speaker 2 04:51

it was from rural to urban in larger Mexico City. I mean, Barden now is now. I mean, it. Distrito Federal, nice Mexico City, but yeah. So from small to larger.

Speaker 1 05:08

Yeah, but that was a big kind of culture difference.

Speaker 2 05:11

It was, and actually, I'm not gonna lie. I mean, it was even harder when I moved to the States because I guess culturally, you never know what it is until you're a nurse into that place in culture. And yes, I came to the states in when I was 21st, 28²⁸, and it was challenging. I was, you know, moving from Mexico City, coming out of the College of Acting from the National Institute of Fine Arts, and Mexico City itself offers a plethora of cultural stuff that you can go to. You name it, and it's there. So, and then I moved to North Georgia, chicken poultry industry. Yeah, a little bit. And then I said, "Where is the art? Right. You know, where do I go? So it was a big shock. I didn't adjust at the beginning, to be honest, to the culture, to the new setting, and I

went back to Mexico, but for a year. But my family was here in the states, so that that brought me back, and I have been here since then.

Speaker 1 06:30

Awesome! I love it. So you've talked about those different places that you grew up in Mexico and kind of rural to urban, but could you explain a little bit more about like what was it like as a culture and as a community where you grew up?

Speaker 2 06:44

Sure, I'll start with I guess with the place where I was born at. Definitely very rural. I'll say there is a lot of poverty, and definitely that's what you know makes families migrate. Even here, you know, when seeking other jobs is just different. You know, you might have a job, but you're looking for something better. So there is nothing different. It's the same when people migrate, even you know, in the country, Mexico. It's because you know we're looking for a better life. So that place is. I was very happy, though. I think that's part of what you want to know as well.

Speaker 1 07:24

Yeah.

Speaker 2 07:25

My we were a family of six: my mother, my father, and six siblings, and close connected to all our relatives, meaning on my dad's side, his brother's family, his sister's family, so that kind of stuff. So we always we were very happy kids, truly, with our the home of our grandparents being really close to us, or let's say next to us, and they had tons of trees, fruit trees like mangoes. We grew up with mangoes, you know. We didn't want more mangoes because it was they had tons of trees and plums of all different colors, tamarind. In other, I'll say, more kind of More no local, but other type of types of fruit as well that is known, I guess, well known around the area.

Speaker 1 08:29

Yeah.

Speaker 2 08:30

But more authentic, I would say. You know, mango. Everybody knows mangoes, but there's some other type of fruit. Like it's called timbiriche. I don't know if the name exists honestly here in Guajerez. So lots of stuff that we grew up with, and we just love it. That was part of our life, and we grew up climbing trees at all the times. We play on the you know up on the trees in the mangoes, so that was my life up to, I'll say, eight nine years old, and then I moved to I moved to Iwala, and then you know all my years until I was I would say 22, I lived there. I went. That was just an urban city, unlike any other city. I love it as well. I went to I finished my elementary school there, middle school, high school, college. Had my friends. We danced a lot, so you know it's very unique as well. We don't have that here. Well, somehow, but you know, it's a little bit different. Yes, but then actually, since I was living in, I guess

that's part of my history as well. Since I was living in the place where I was born, what I can recall, my dad was migrating to. States back and forth, and even before I believe before I was born, with the migrant farm workers program, with this exchange program. So that was his life. So, so it was basically my dad going from from the states to Mexico, and then Mexico City as well, because you know in that place there was not much to do truly other than agriculture, but it's not for it's not it was not big production, but more for family consumption, so it didn't produce any income, so he had to go out and you know, as I'm saying, to the states and to Mexico. So that is what planted the first, I guess, idea of coming to the states when we moved to Mexico City, my my dad also came here and he was here and then you know it was just tough to be separated

Speaker 1 11:10
yeah

Speaker 2 11:10
and anyways financially

Speaker 3 11:13
right

Speaker 2 11:14
so my mom for whatever reason decided to come to the states I was 18 so that is another, you know, I guess, big event in my life as well. I was 18, and I was taking care of my two younger siblings, which one was 16 and the other one 14 in middle school. So that made me strong as well because I was a very strong person since then and resilient. So yeah, but definitely that separation-it's a mark when you live with that separation, like like emptiness, and because you don't have your parents with you,

Speaker 1 11:55
yeah,

Speaker 2 11:56
and you become a parent of the younger,

Speaker 1 11:58
right? Because then you were left to care for your siblings.

Speaker 2 12:01
There you go.

Speaker 1 12:02
So were you in the middle of the sibling order?

Speaker 2 12:05

Oh yes. Yes, I was the fourth. The three older actually were here already with my parents, and they wanted us to come actually.

Speaker 1 12:17

Yeah.

Speaker 2 12:18

But one of the things I guess is very important is that my mother, both of my parents didn't have a lot of education. My mother only accomplished second grade, and my father, I think first grade, and super smart people. And I look at them from the lens of a you know an educator, super smart. My mother wanted to become a teacher, but the school that she was attending was moving her mother. Her mother didn't let her go, so she grew up with that stigma of not letting be who she wanted to be. So that had a meaningful impact for me later on on becoming a teacher. One because the financial as well, you know, having six siblings and I was the fourth. All the other three older siblings actually at some point we the six of them were in school. My father was here, but you know there were sometimes when he didn't have a job, so there was no money in Mexico. Whatever my mom could accommodate, my mom was doing labor for others, washing clothes, in ironing clothes. So it was a tough life for us. And she said my two older brothers went to the college for engineering, so they're engineers, and no, the second one for accounting. But he dropped out because he wanted to support the family, and the third one to engineering, and and then it was me. There was someone who passed in between, like the third and the pool, so yeah. So put on the spot of you know you don't have any choice to go somewhere else to another city. I wanted to actually study something else. And honestly, I didn't know what I wanted. I knew I wanted something different at that age. Yeah, but not the normal, so I didn't want to be a teacher. That was the least thing that I wanted to be.

Speaker 1 14:25

That's so interesting that you say that. Seems like a lot of teachers think that at first.

Speaker 2 14:30

Yes, and so yeah, I went to the College of Education right there in my city. But they were here already, you know, during that transition. That was Miguel, and she, they, they. I'm saying my mother, father must in igual, and then she come. My brother next to me was already here. He couldn't stand being in Mexico with us, so he decided to join my family. I was concerned. About coming here and not being able to be an educated person, not being able to reach my goals, just because the now it's a lot of media, right? Back then it was movies, all the the I guess the information that flows back and forth through music, through movies, and that was not a good propaganda, you know, about U.S. and and all the world of drugs and so on. Say no, I I don't want that life for me. I'm not going. I want to be someone, even though if not if not it's not a you know becoming a teacher, but I want to do something meaningful in my life. So I decided to stay, but I became a teacher. And you know, when we are

teachers, it was before telling you back on 1991 when I became a teacher, very young teacher, science study school very early and different than others, so went to work as a rural teacher. That was the thing to do back in the 80 s and before. Once you finish the college of education and you became a teacher, you replace in rural, very very rural places, more than the one that I was even born at, with more poverty,

Speaker 3 16:21
right?

Speaker 2 16:22
Another shock to me as well, you know. And that right there, what I really wanted to do was to make a difference in the life of others, and you know, the way we are educated is that we we became or become agents of change in the communities, and we really have to do it and help the community be different. But seeing all the injustices, not only in my, you know, in the place where I was born, but also in that particular little village where I was working, I felt like I needed to do something bigger, not standing there. So that was that was my I would say first trigger to move to Mexico City, and and truly, and you know, sounds crazy, but I always have to say it because that was my plan. I wanted to be the secretary of education, and that was not impossible to me. And actually, when I moved to Mexico City, I was making steps towards. But and the reason is because there was again poverty, you know, with those kiddos abandoned, the school system really broken, and I wanted to make a difference. So I went to Mexico City with my younger sister, who wanted to be a doctor, the smartest person. Again, I was very inspired by her as well. She was the youngest in our family, and she was winning national awards and sciences and that kind of stuff. So we had a very small family, actually. That's a doctor

Speaker 4 18:12
now.

Speaker 2 18:12
She's a doctor, but there is a whole story right there. But she's a successful. I mean, she was a very successful pediatrician in Mexico until things change, right? Yeah, but she accomplished that in one of those matters as well. But I feel still feel very proud, you know, because I feel like I'm raised.

Speaker 1 18:34
Yeah, absolutely.

Speaker 2 18:36
So yeah, right there, you know, knowing that I didn't want to be a teacher, anyways. You know, I was always fighting with this, not wanting to be, but at the same time, I wanted to be the best, definitely. Even though, I think that's a characteristic of me. Even though I don't want something, I want to be the best until the last day that I'm there. So yeah, so that was me. Yeah, yeah. So I started. I had to start digging for a

new job in Mexico City, you know, and I did because if you dig and you know look for what you want, you encounter it. You find it right away, and I did. I also got scholarships to do my master's, and I was only 22, and I got my, you know, my scholarship. That's something unusual in Mexico. We don't get that itself, but I did, and I had the greatest opportunity to live in my classroom and go and have my master's degree with my salary for a year. That was amazing. I just you know look back and I can't believe it.

Speaker 1 19:41

So was it an in-person master's program?

Speaker 2 19:44

Excuse me.

Speaker 1 19:45

You went like in-person, face-to-face. Oh yes,

Speaker 2 19:47

yes, yes, yes, in-person, yes. And that was a master's in education with computers, computer applications. It was very new back then because something we're trying to figure out. Computers were gonna be good on us or not. That was crazy. But anyways, at the same time that I was attending my masters, I was digging what else I wanted to be or who I was. So anytime that someone asked me, "Who are you? I'm still digging, you know, into my roots because I knew that there was something else when I was in the college for teaching. Part of the tools that we are equipped with is the art, so we're very artistic. All the teachers have a set of skills, which is the cultural heritage, and we learn about it. When we go into the communities, we know a lot, and we create festivals, all these festivities that you see. The teachers know how to do it to bring in the community, the community into the school. So my focus, I'm once all over, you know, in college, the band, the military band. I thought that I could be good for that, you know. So I'm my husband. She's giving me a set of, you know, of those. So I feel very happy. That's very new. So I did that. The military band. I like the ROTC more or less. And then I did dance, a whole dance. I wasn't good on getting, you know, dancing. I said this is not for me. I tried the orchestra because I wanted to play the battery again. You know, similar than the other to see that kind of. But there was a senior, and they didn't let me play. So I started with the electrical guitar, and then I wanted to do better, so I went to the another music group and I said, "Hey, teach me to play the guitar. I said, "You know how to play it. You do it on your own. I say, "No, I don't know. Sometimes you know it's hard to believe that you have the skills, but if you don't have someone right there when you need it, you don't believe in you. And I think that happens to me several times. Even though I was very resilient, so I left that group too because they were telling me that I knew, and I thought that I didn't know how to do it. So I went to the theater and ride there and landed with the acting, and thought that was me acting. So I started the acting school in 1993 when I was working on the master in the morning, and in the evening I was going to the acting school. So the acting school was from 3o'clock

to 10 o'clock. Those were my classes. It was very intensive because it's some sort of conservatory. Yeah, so I'm finished with my master's and completed with my second bachelor's in 1997.

Speaker 1 22:47

So how long did your master's take you? How many years? It was

Speaker 2 22:50

a year. It was very intensive as well. We took take lots of classes. Yeah. So I was 23, and when I was 27, I completed my second bachelor's. I had a goal because you know I'm a I was a person with goals, and I said once I finish my this bachelor's, I'll go to the state to spend some time with my mother, and because I felt like you know it was my emptiness, but my family emptiness, and my mother, who was in so much suffering as well for this separation. But I mean, those are choices, and it's fine. I mean, I think that is the best choice that she made, and I wouldn't do the same with my kids. When, as I look back, said, "Oh my God, I'm gonna leave my 40-year-old, you know, no, by any means, but that's what happened. It was okay. So I came in 1997. Was no, as I said, 1998 because I'm finished in December. It was 1998 when I immediately came in January. I couldn't adjust to the states, you know, when you have your whole set of culture and who you are, and you think that you, it's hard. It was Gainesville, Georgia. Actually, I'm gonna say that Gainesville, Georgia. The I mean, and they couldn't see the streets. Where I'm gonna walk? Where do I see people? I went out of the house and didn't see people. Where is the people? You know, I miss people a lot. You can imagine. Have you been in Mexico City? Anywhere in Mexico? No, that's crazy. But it's people all over the place, and that's Mexico in general. You know, so I was missing people. The meaning, I guess, of humanity. I didn't feel it. I felt like a lion in a room,

Speaker 1 24:43

right? Like no community,

Speaker 2 24:45

no community, and but also I wanted to do acting movies. That was another thing that you know that pushed me to the stage because I wanted to be engaged on cultural product projects. And but it happened because you know since I was a teacher I was didn't tell more in the story that I was doing more stuff as far as work goes. I was already working for the secretary of education, like my department here, the similar. So I was progressing.

Speaker 5 25:20

I

Speaker 2 25:22

was progressing towards my goal. You know, being immersed more into the. I mean, it's political side, if you will. You know, but also not only political is education of

kids. But anyways, my goal was: if I like it, I'll stay. If I don't like it, I'll stay and go back in in ways. Long story short, I've been here since then.

Speaker 1 25:47

Yeah. So, what year was that? Whenever you moved to the U.S. for the first time.

Speaker 2 25:51

For the first time, 1998. Gotcha. To stay in 1999.

Speaker 1 25:56

Okay. Interesting. Gotcha. So, we've talked a lot about a lot of these questions. So, let's see. Can you tell us a little bit about the place? Let's go back to where you grew up in Mexico. Have you been back there and like seen how it's changed over time?

Speaker 2 26:19

I haven't. I haven't. I haven't been back in Mexico to Mexico. The last time that I was there was in 20 no 2004 through a study abroad program that I created along with a couple of professors from University of North Georgia.

Speaker 1 26:40

Yeah,

Speaker 2 26:40

but that was just the big places, and I haven't been, you know, in that place. I don't know. I have you know kind of mixed feelings of going back, and and I think personally I always deal with this of who I am. Not only you know who are my education and truly you know being more into my having. I think the family separation. I don't know. It must be just me, but you know my personal interest in culture and acting, all of that because I love it. But also, I think family separation has to see a lot and seeing those places in poverty. I mean, just to visit, it's not appealing so far. But my fam, my brother goes very often, and actually, I have a video of the place. You know, my grandparents, and we were, I refer to the mangoes, and he recently go, and he's trying to restore this place for like a family place. It was inherited by my parent to him, and so he's restoring it. It actually, in a sense, it is. You know, it's it's rural. Yes, it's beautiful, but I haven't been there.

Speaker 1 27:59

Gotcha. That's awesome. So, let's see. You've talked a lot about in Mexico how there was a sense of community and people everywhere. So, kind of what was that like? Like, what were neighbors like, or what kind of gatherings did you guys have? Those types of things, and then maybe how was that different whenever you came here? I know you said in Gainesville it was like, where's the people?

Speaker 2 28:27

Yes. So kind of

Speaker 1 28:29

how was that? How did that look in in Mexico City or any of those places for you?

Speaker 2 28:34

Well, I can I guess I can refer to it in different ways. One is the family gatherings, the community gatherings, the school gatherings, in even the okay. I'm gonna start with the family. The for example, in my own family, we got together in my grandma's house, and remember because I was a little kid, right? I remember our mothers coming together and made tamales. Yeah, when the because they were farming corn peppers, so when they finish with whatever part of the season for the corn, they celebrate it or we celebrate it, and then our families came together. And all families do it, not only ours. Our family with tamales, and it's just a an excuse to be together. I would say, and be grateful for the crops and for what they're growing, so family from other cities also came to visit. So all the kids running all over the places in this house, which is you know with the mango trees, you see, was big a big piece of land, and it was just a beautiful gathering. They had a long, long table where you know they had the big, I guess, recipients with the dough, corn dog, and you know they will do it together. The males could go to the fields to get the the leaves to make the tamales because it was don't know whether actually dry corn husks, but actually with green leaves from the stall. Yes, and they wrap them in that type of tamales. You

Speaker 4 30:30

know, I

Speaker 2 30:30

remember it's very vivid. The other thing is, you know, celebrations like even my brother have his quinceañero. You know, like the quinsianeros that you see when he turned 15, the whole community was there in that house, and he organized it himself. I don't know how he did it, but he did organize his party. So we had a big, big, big recipient with pozole, like big, that I can remember. Again, I was a child, so maybe it was not that big, but and remembered that place to me very meaningfully.

Speaker 1 31:01

Yeah,

Speaker 2 31:01

and people dancing, loud music under the trees, the parrota tree because that is a very you know specific type of tree that grows there is huge, and the house on the side.

Speaker 3 31:15

I love it. That's awesome.

Speaker 2 31:16

So that was beautiful. The other thing is truly the quinceaneras, the weddings we will have when we go to middle school. We have our also ances in order to come and maybe dances, but those type of dances and in high school as well. It was very often you know that we have that college weddings and but also as I said, the schools we have lots of celebrations, lots and lots, and the community camps, and the parents really, really attend those events.

Speaker 3 31:51

Right, that's awesome. So let's kind of transition to your artifact a little bit. What do you tell us about what you brought today? Yeah, I have. I didn't have everything. I like collecting. I like collecting more stuff. I have more than I need.

Speaker 1 32:08

That's your beautiful.

Speaker 2 32:09

And actually, I have a couple of toys from my childhood when I was possibly five years old, because my family, my grandma, could travel to another town that celebrates the they call it patrons, like San Michaels, for example. I don't know the same that they you know have there, and they'll go to another town to be part of that celebration on their way back. They'll bring toys to us and they it is clay. So and I still have you know that clay toy at home. I think I'm trying to put things up and couldn't find. But and they'll take us the grandchildren every time that they went every year they'll take one at a time or two at a time. They didn't take me. It was my turn, but my grandma passed by the time that it was my turn. So I didn't have that, but I had toys. So I guess definitely this becomes part of my culture of who I am. Just because, as I said, that place where they used to go, it was the they call it fiesta de San Agustín San Agustín, and actually my father's name was Augustine. So that place is where, and that is in my state where they elaborate and create this clay, these dishes that you might see at the Mexican stores this color because next to my estate is Oaxaca, and they have black clay. Okay. So it's it's different from you see things very different from state to state, and that's the other thing. You go here from one place to another, and you see the same. You know, chains. We don't back then we didn't have chains. There is more now, but not back then. So these are, I'll say, clay is important to me because reminds me my family, my childhood, my location, all of that, all the beautiful stuff, and the people gatherings as well, and the food. So this is what it is. And my, they use this. They call them moyas pots, and they use them to cook. Still, you know, I don't use them much. I try sometimes. And my sister say, I didn't know you like that stuff. I say, I do. Yeah, and these literally things that are used in the kitchen in Mexico. This is a little bit larger, and it's used in the kitchen to wash their hands when they're making the tortillas. Of course, you know a larger bowl.

Speaker 3 34:56

Right.

Speaker 2 34:56

But to me, it's just beautiful. It's handmade and. This is one of the fruit trees that they make make it out of.

Speaker 1 35:04

That's so cool.

Speaker 2 35:05

And this is nowadays is you know just an ornament here to for the parties as well, like weddings or quinceañeras, something like that. This even was used for a baptism for a child that was baptized, so this is just a of those body things that someone using 1999. So I have kept this kept this from since 19. You can see here the year is 1999. Yeah. So will

Speaker 1 35:36

this be given to the person or whoever is baptized? No. Like a key. they

Speaker 2 35:42

they give it to the families attending the the party just as a memory.

Speaker 3 35:47

That's really cool.

Speaker 2 35:49

But the reason that I have this is more than for the party is because it's again it's the clay, and it reminds me that we had this stuff in when I was in Mexico more than the party itself. You know, it has a more, more connotation, more meaning to me. More, it's more my roots when I collect this stuff. Yeah,

Speaker 2 36:09

yeah. So,

Speaker 1 36:11

so was this really like an art? Like, did almost everyone learn how to make these things, or was it more specialized? Uh

Speaker 2 36:19

huh. It's more specialized, more typical of one place in particular.

Speaker 1 36:24

Okay. Very cool.

Speaker 2 36:27

Not everybody knows how to do it.

Speaker 1 36:29

Is this something that is still a common practice? Oh yes.

Speaker 2 36:32

Because I mean, if you go to Mexican stores here, you will see, oh my God, they really profit. It's a good business because our kids and it's generational. Those stores will not die. It's generational. My kids now, you know, appreciate this stuff. It all depends how we make our kids grow. There will be some kids in school. You'll encounter those that are ashamed of their language, of their culture, and they want they don't want to speak Spanish or any other. Back then we called them dialects. Now their languages as well. They were they are embarrassed to use them. So, but now my kids they'll bring they went to. This is who I am too. They have been in private school all their years. They went to Lakeview in Gainesville Association in Gainesville. They went to Bullock Academy. They went to academy. They went to University of Pennsylvania, and now they both are at Emory, and there is a standard and a reason for that more than the universities themselves as well. So, but they can bring tacos where they are, you know, because heritage and culture and values it follows you anywhere you go. So,

Speaker 1 38:00

that's wonderful. So you can keep talking about these if you'd like, but I do have another question. No, you you ask me. I'm here for you. Let's hit

Speaker 4 38:08

this first.

Speaker 1 38:09

Yeah, go ahead.

Speaker 4 38:10

What is this? Who made it?

Speaker 2 38:12

No, not me. It's my mother who made it. Those I just decided to bring it because, again, to me, is an important piece because all that I'm mentioning about schools and I believe this was my mother's heritage education, a second grade person that knew like a college student. She had content, pretty high content, and I don't know how. So her heritage is education. So when she when she I don't have a date, but anyways, both of my parents pass away from Alzheimer's and dementia. My mother just passed last year with Alzheimer's in. because I was living here, she'll come and spend some time with me. Because we divided ourselves, now we're only five siblings. We divided ourselves to take care of her after my father passed, because he she took care of my father with dementia, and then we, the five of us, took care of her every time that she came. We did art. I love art, and this is one of her drawings. And again, to me, it's meaningful because I think it was what is in her mind with the type of houses, but it's a hybrid with what she sees here as well with the gardens and all that kind of stuff. So you know, even though it's a simple art, I can see the

combination of her thinking and how she adapted the art. When I was looking at it, said, "Oh my God, this is very elaborated for a person with Alzheimer's." It was her possibly from the time that she was diagnosed and the time that she passed. She had nine years of Alzheimer's, and it was her eighth years, eighth year with us with Alzheimer's. So yeah,

Speaker 1 40:19

it's very impressive. I like the detail in

Speaker 2 40:22

there. is definitely and definitely I keep it as an inspiration for whatever thing I do, and for the reason it's meaningful because it brings me back to my origin, but also brings me back to who she was here.

Speaker 1 40:37

Yeah, that's great. So, did she live in Statesboro?

Speaker 2 40:41

She lived in Gainesville.

Speaker 1 40:42

Okay, so they never moved

Speaker 2 40:44

down. They all they moved to Gainesville and they lived there.

Speaker 1 40:48

So what did bring you to Statesboro?

Speaker 2 40:51

Work. I was working already for the department, and well, no, no, no, they offered me a position that was based out of Brooklyn at the Risa Building.

Speaker 1 41:04

That's awesome. So we've talked so much about like the differences in community in Mexico and in the states, and this wonderful like art that you brought to your teaching. So really, how did teaching look different in Mexico and in the United States, how do those differ, or how are they similar?

Speaker 2 41:27

I would say the biggest difference is the in the platform lack of resources. We don't have resources in Mexico, so you will see platforms that are very. Empty, very empty. I will say, with no resources at all. I would say that's the biggest difference, and and definitely, I think our back then our system needed to be more accountable for the adding. Also, the the school board teachers as well needed to be more accountable. I don't think we, once we graduated and we went to these rural communities,

everybody took the responsibility and the new teachers that they needed to take, and didn't work the five days as you know the required time that we needed to work. So that was a big difference as well. That I see, you know, commitment is commitment, and I think one thing that I really, really like. I mean, we have great teachers here, great teachers, definitely. I'm believing our systems. Even though I went to private schools, but there is a reason for that. I still believe that we have committed teachers in on the teaching part, on the cultural aspect, I think we have long way to go and fulfill our responsibility. That is the human side of leadership and education as well.

Speaker 1 42:49

Interesting. Would you say a little bit more about what you mean by the cultural aspect of teaching?

Speaker 2 42:55

Yes, because you know addressing the needs of the students is not only the academics. We need to see beyond what the students need, where they're coming from. Do we understand? Do we really address what they need? Do we really want them to perform well, despite the color? I don't care about the color. I don't care who you are or where you're coming from. And you know, I think that's the way that we should look at people. That's those are my beliefs. And same with the students. It happens that I'm working for the migrant education program, and those are kids that need our assistance because they have a migrant lifestyle and they move so many times across district lines and across the states in their missing content. But beyond that, they have other struggles: identity, cultural, friends, social isolation, lack of resources, and that we need to understand. But I think sometimes, I mean, I don't blame the teachers. I think it's the lack of exposure because I mean, if you don't have it, you don't know it until you're exposed to it. But we, and it takes it takes some time to get to that understanding as well, to be conscientious about it. But I also have to be honest and think. Sometimes we're not ready to learn. We're not ready. That's

Speaker 1 44:19

interesting. And so this is really a part of your role now in the Department of Education. It's been at all the

Speaker 2 44:25

times. It is my role, and actually, you know what? I really suffer when I moved from Mexico because I was serving the most needed communities as well, and I cried because I said, "Where is my commitment that I really, you know, wanted to fulfill. Now I'm leaving to go somewhere else, and I'm abandoning these students that need me the most. But it happens that those students that are serving are here, so there is a reason as well. But it could be any other community. If students need me, I'm gonna help them and people in general. You know, like. Helping people, and that's something nature of a teacher too. This

Speaker 1 45:05
is

Speaker 4 45:07
not a question on here. It's just something I'm curious about. What are like practical steps that we could take when we become teachers in the classroom to help these ELL students and migrant students?

Speaker 2 45:19
I think one of the things truly approaching those families, getting immersed into those communities, because that is going to be a way to get to know those families, get into their world. We bring them to our world, right? But that interaction that we're looking for to get to know their places, that is an understanding, you know. And it can be done in different ways. I'm not saying go and live with them. No, there is different ways that we can immerse into getting immersed into their that those environments to get to know those families a little bit better, or create those environments. Even our school, I'm pretty sure those can be created as well. Yeah. So I'll say you, as a teacher, just embrace it and say. I mean, even to say, "Hola, go with that. Oh my God, that opens a huge door. You know, those were three words. Three words. That is the simplest, the most simple step that we can take. I smile. They come to our schools. Listen, smile at them as they come again. Let's make them feel welcome here. And you know that is the human side again. You know that for leadership and teachers, I think we need to be, we need to appeal to that side of humanity to become better.

Speaker 1 46:41
Yeah, I love that. That's wonderful. Well, Brooke, do you have anything else?

Speaker 4 46:45
I think I covered so.

Speaker 1 46:46
Yeah, I think that's good. Well, thank you so much for spending this time in this interview with us. I've enjoyed it so much, and I think we're going to learn a lot. So, anyway, we really appreciate

Speaker 2 46:58
it. Of course, yeah.